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New Evidence-Based Tools to Create Safe Schools and Prevent Suicide

“Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention” released by The Trevor Project, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American School Counselor Association and National Association of School Psychologists

(February 5, 2014, Los Angeles, CA) – In time for National School Counseling Week, four leading organizations supporting the mental health of youth are releasing a “[Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention](#).” This modular, adaptable document will help educators and school administrators implement comprehensive suicide prevention policies in communities nationwide. When suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth as young as 10 through age-19, it is crucial that our school districts have proactive suicide prevention policies in place.

“It’s hard to talk about suicide, but we know that a young person’s environment plays an incredibly important role in preventing it – especially for students who are most vulnerable to attempting suicide, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students,” said Abbe Land, Executive Director and CEO of the Trevor Project. “Improving a school’s environment is something that school leaders can control, and this ‘Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention’ provides accessible steps to making life-saving changes for youth in crisis.”

The model policy, a collaboration created by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the American School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and The Trevor Project, is research-based, comprehensive and easily adaptable for middle and high schools without policies or those that need help amending existing policies. Inside, readers will find specific, actionable steps to support school personnel; sample language for student handbooks; suggestions for involving parents and guardians in suicide prevention; and guidance for addressing in-school suicide attempts.

“Our organizations came together to provide different perspectives on crisis intervention, youth mental health and suicide prevention. We were able to define the best practices that create a strong, positive school environment,” said Robert Gebbia, Chief Executive Officer, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

In addition to educators and school leaders, school-based mental health professionals such as counselors and psychologists are essential in putting a policy into practice to enhance the whole school environment. “School counselors are often the first to identify a student who may be at risk,” said Dr. Richard Wong, Executive Director, American School Counselor Association. “With protocols in place we can help that individual student as well as support school personnel in creating safe schools.”

School psychologists can further provide, “insights into family systems and mental health issues to help ensure that our learning environments are respectful of all students,” said Susan Gorin, Executive Director, National Association of School Psychologists.

Only four states in the U.S. currently require that educators receive annual training to prevent suicide, (Alaska, Kentucky, Louisiana and Tennessee). To reduce the prevalence of suicide attempts among youth throughout the nation, the movement for mandated suicide prevention training must grow, and school districts everywhere must take steps to have strong prevention policies in place. With recommendations rooted in best practices, the “Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention” can complement state law requirements and help schools achieve an inclusive, comprehensive suicide prevention plan. To access this resource, visit TheTrevorProject.org/pages/modelschoolpolicy.

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS



AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR
Suicide Prevention

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is the leading national not-for-profit organization exclusively dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide through research, education and advocacy, and to reaching out to people with mental disorders and those impacted by suicide. To fully achieve its mission, AFSP engages in the following Five Core Strategies: 1) fund scientific research, 2) offer educational programs for professionals, 3) educate the public about mood disorders and suicide prevention, 4) promote policies and legislation that impact suicide and prevention, and 5) provide programs and resources for survivors of suicide loss and people at risk, and involve them in the work of the Foundation. Learn more at www.afsp.org.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) promotes student success by expanding the image and influence of professional school counseling through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. ASCA helps school counselors guide their students toward academic achievement, personal and social development, and career planning to help today's students become tomorrow's productive, contributing members of society. Founded in 1952, ASCA currently has a network of 50 state associations and a membership of more than 33,000 school counseling professionals. Learn more at www.schoolcounselor.org.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) represents more than 25,000 school psychologists who work with students, educators, and families to support the academic achievement, positive behavior, and mental wellness of all students. NASP promotes best practices and policies that allow school psychologists to work with parents and educators to help shape individual and system wide supports that provide the necessary prevention and intervention services to ensure that students have access to the mental health, social-emotional, behavioral, and academic supports they need to be successful at home, at school, and throughout life. Learn more at www.nasponline.org.

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) young people ages 13-24. Every day, The Trevor Project saves young lives through its free and confidential phone, instant message and text messaging crisis intervention services. A leader and innovator in suicide prevention, The Trevor Project offers the largest safe social networking community for LGBTQ youth, best practice suicide prevention trainings and resources for youth and adults, and advocacy initiatives. Learn more at TheTrevorProject.org.